

Influenza Activity in Kansas as of March 2, 2004

The latest flu report from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment for the week ending February 28, 2004 (week 8) classifies flu activity in the state as "Sporadic." The classification is based on reports of decreasing influenza-like illness (ILI) in previous areas of increased activity. This is the fifth week at this influenza activity level since the week ending November 8, 2003 (week 45).

According to the CDC, "Influenza activity remained low during the week of February 22-28, 2004. The percentage of patient visits for influenza-like illness (ILI) remained below the national baseline (2.5%). There were no reports of widespread or regional influenza activity from state and territorial epidemiologists during week 8. Five states reported local activity, 32 states, New York City, the District of Columbia, Guam, and Puerto Rico reported sporadic activity, and 12 states reported no influenza activity." Please see the CDC website <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/fluactivity.htm>. National results for week 8 should be posted on March 5, 2004 or soon after.

Laboratory tests have confirmed that primarily influenza type A (N3H2) viruses are circulating in Kansas this season. Recent testing by the CDC revealed that samples submitted by DHEL were similar to the Fujian strain circulating in the United States this season. Kansas's isolates were similar to the predominant (81.2%) strain of circulating influenza A. "Of the 565 influenza A (H3N2) isolates that have been characterized (in the United States), 106 (18.8%) were similar antigenically to the vaccine strain A/Panama/2007/99 (H3N2), and 459 (81.2%) were similar to the drift variant, A/Fujian/411/2002 (H3N2)" - CDC. Two infections from influenza type B have also been confirmed by a rapid test in the Southeastern part of the state.

KDHE strongly recommends flu shots for all high-risk individuals and everyone should be reminded to practice good respiratory etiquette i.e.

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue every time you cough or sneeze and throw the used tissue in the waste basket
- If you don't have a tissue, sneeze or cough into the crook of your elbow
- After sneezing/coughing, always wash your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand cleaner
- Stay home if you are sick.
- Do not share eating utensils, drinking glasses, towels or other personal items.

If you have any questions about influenza activity in Kansas or wish to become a sentinel site for surveillance, please contact Daniel Neises (785) 296-5585 or Kathleen Waters (785) 296-0028.